



The Faithful Steward

A Newsletter of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America

"We are all called to be faithful and wise stewards, ever waiting for the coming of our Lord ." LUKE 12:40-46

In the Father's Embrace: From the Diary of a Monk

By Hieromartyr Joseph, Metropolitan of Petrograd

Excerpts from <http://holmogorov.rossia.org/libr/statyil/iosifpetr.htm> translated by Holy Nativity Convent, Brookline, MA

He who does not acquire God here, will not see him in the future life, either.¹ But how do we know whether we are acquiring Him here or not? It is simple. To acquire the Lord does not mean to have only constant contentment, joy and peace in one's soul. Rather, it means to grieve over each of our faults and shortcomings. This precisely is the sign that we possess the Lord, when we do not feel calmly indifferent to our shortcomings, but grieve over them. If we did not love the Lord, if He were not dear to our hearts, then we would sin calmly, no fault of ours would torment us, we would see nothing bad in ourselves, and nothing of this sort would grieve us. True, it is very sad to have and to acknowledge our faults and our shortcomings, our wretchedness. But

this sorrow is unto salvation. It is this very sorrow which obtains the Lord for us, Who has mercy on all who sorrow and Who calls, "Come," all ye who are such, "I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).



Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd (1872 - November 7/20, 1937)

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They say that the Lord is too great to pay attention to such insignificant things as man with his needs, sorrows, and desires. But is it not just the opposite? It is precisely because the Lord is so great, wise and good that it is easy to conceive of Him as caring not only for man, but even for the tiniest microbe. Of course, we cannot fathom this with our meager, insignificant little mind, and we dare to judge concerning the Lord according to our own nothingness and feeble-mindedness.

We might live out our entire life without attaining the consciousness that we have drawn near to the Lord. But if only we have had the desire to draw near, and diligent effort according to our ability, it will be well with us. Our goal has been attained. If, according to the word of the Apostle, the Lord is not far even from every one of the heathen (see Acts 17:27), then all the more is He near those who seek Him, and He will not reject him that cometh to Him (John 6:37).

It will be well with us even if we spend all our life here in just seeking and longing. At the conclusion of such a life the Lord will come to us and will all at once give us everything which others have received with labor in installments. And the more we endure, grieve, suffer and are deprived here, the more we will be granted by Him later.

Seek, and you shall find (Matt. 7:7). Seek, even if you seek all your life—strive, try, fall, arise, lose heart, grieve—all with the consciousness that you have before you a goal: Christ the Saviour, His kindness, consolation and love; and He will not fail to reward you a hundredfold for your labor and patience.

Here is how we should think of our sorrows and sufferings: at this time we cannot understand their significance in our lives, their opportuneness, the benefit they bring in our spiritual life. Only when we will be able to look back and see our life in its entirety and completeness will we understand and see that what seemed to us to be so grievous, was actually so important for us. By means of these sorrows the Lord was nurturing our patience, our faith, our love and hope in Him; He was nurturing in us the spirit of prayer, of a compunctionate turning to Him.

The highest good on earth, the wellspring of unfailing consolation and encouragement is to know that we are on the right path, that we are saved by the Lord—not only are we not excluded from the objects of His fatherly care and concern, but we more than anything else are included. He nourishes us and guides us toward Himself through His Mysteries. Here on earth, in our earthly life, we as Christians are like His children. We are surrounded and refreshed by His kindness, His benefactions. Is all this just so that having only briefly enjoyed this kindness here, we should lose it in the future life? O, of course not. Even greater kindnesses and benefactions of His must await us. Now we only gaze with delight at His beauty and goodness, only just slightly lifting the edge of the veil which separates Him from us. But the time will come when this veil will be drawn aside completely, and we will be flooded as with light by His kindness and His grace. Before this hope, what are all our earthly burdens and sorrows? Shadows, illusions, vanity. Our lack of faith, our estrangement from God—that is the main cause and the perpetuator of our faintheartedness and despondency in life.

“That He grant us... a virtuous life...”² The prayer for a virtuous life is the cry of a Christian groaning over the domination of sin. A life without virtue—that is our woe, our misfortune, undesirable and yet inescapable. We must entreat the Lord that He would take pity on our misfortune and help us to overcome and eliminate it by the help and power of His grace.

“Make ready, O Zabulon, and exult, O Nephthalim...”³ These symbolize all that is outcast from God, far from Him and foreign to Him. If the Lord calls even such as these and prepares them for His coming, then will He not all the more come to our hearts, loving Him, thirsting for Him, preparing for Him, even though they are torn away and distanced from Him by the constant assaults of the enemy.

Why is my soul so dejected, so darkened and empty? O Lord, if Thou wert here, my soul would not feel so dead, so lifeless and joyless (see John 11:21). I know that there is good cause for Thee to abandon her, who has abandoned Thee. But, O Compassionate One, is it not of Thee that we now chant, “In the abundance of Thy mercy Thou hast appeared to sinners and publicans, O our Saviour. Where indeed should Thy light have shone, save upon them that sit in darkness?”⁴ And so visit also my darkened soul, thirsting for Thine illumination.

Many people incorrectly think that saving one’s own soul is secondary, that one should be more concerned about saving others. No. When your own soul is perishing and you acknowledge it, you must take it in hand first of all, for it too is God’s treasure, and by saving it you are more likely to save others as well. The light of a soul which

is saved has the quality of drawing others to salvation as well, more than we can by concerning ourselves first with the salvation of others, and only then with our own.

How and by what means was Zacchaeus saved? The Lord came in simplicity to him, to a great sinner, and Zacchaeus melted: "He stood, and said: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore it fourfold" (cf. Luke 19:8). The very fact that the Lord visited him softened the heart of the sinner. The Lord did not have any need to speak of the purpose of His coming—to save a sinner. There was no need for Him to argue, "Do this and do that, if you wish to be saved." The Lord simply came, and His very coming caused Zacchaeus to come to himself and to be reborn as one saved instead of a perishing soul. O compassionate Lord! I would wish to blame Thee for my misfortune of being hardened in sin, negligent, and careless. If only Thou wouldst visit my fallen soul, it would be thoroughly aroused by Thy visitation and would be impetuously changed with regard to its disposition and its fate.

Whence came Zacchaeus' sudden love for the Lord, faith in Him, readiness to do good, so contrary to his entire former attitude? All this the Lord brought with Him to Zacchaeus. The Treasury of love and consolation came to Zacchaeus, and he, accustomed as he was to correctly valuing pre-

cious things and dealing with them, showed us that he was not mistaken and that the Lord was precisely the One Whom Zacchaeus confessed Him to be.

"Thou art my foundation, O Saviour, my refuge and my strength: do Thou make steadfast my shaken heart ..." ⁵ A wonderful hymn. Whose shaken heart will it not make steadfast by its compunctionate quality, its grace-given beauty, warmth and power.



Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd

All manner of gossip, quarrels, discord with our neighbors—all this is often the enemy attempting to disrupt our tranquillity, our peaceful and saving work of serving God, to distract us from prayer and labor or struggle. Understand that the

enemy is behind all your annoyances, and do not yield to temptation. Stay calm. Say to the Lord, "Lord, Thou seest the truth; do Thou defend me. Help me to stay calm. Let everything turn out to the enemy's shame, and not result in my embitterment."

We cause the enemy to rejoice greatly if we respond to his attacks by becoming annoyed, sorrowful, despondent, enfeebled. That is just what he wants to achieve by the mean tricks he plays on us through our neighbors.

"Behold, this Child is set"—the very same One, at one and the same time—"for the fall and rising again" (Luke 2:34)—the fall of some, and the rising again of others. One person says, "Come down from the Cross, and I will believe" (cf. Matt. 27:42). But I say, "O Lord, that is why I believe, that is why I love Thee, that is why I thirst to imitate Thee, precisely because Thou didst not come down from the Cross. Herein is manifest Thy uniquely divine majesty, that having nailed Thyself to the Cross for me, Thou didst stand fast thereon against all temptations and human sophistries, and didst bring to completion Thine awesome deed of wresting me from the captivity of Hades."

¹ A saying of St. Symeon the New Theologian.

² From the New Year service.

³ Dismissal Hymn of the Forefeast of Theophany.

⁴ Troparion from Vespers of Theophany.

⁵ Heirmos, Eighth Tone, Ode Four.

God's Farm

St. Gregory of Sinai Monastery

In May of 2002, the monks of St. Gregory of Sinai Monastery in Loch Lomond, Lake County, CA, joined by a large number of other workers, planted what would eventually become one of the biggest plantations of olives in the region, in the adjacent town of Kelseyville, some 20 minutes from the Monastery. The monks usually refer to the site by the monastic term, the “Metochion”.

We prepared the 7-acre site to receive the 3000 olive seedlings, clearing the land of the long-dead skeletons of a once-thriving walnut farm. The Lake County region has been famous for walnuts and pears since the late 19th century, products that have run into intense competition from other areas and from South American plantations. The decision to set up an olive grove is being watched by area agricultural professionals. A successful product—table olives and olive oil—would have a real impact on the fragile Lake County economy, and monks are stopped regularly on the streets of local towns and asked how the plantation is faring.

In May of 2002, an initial planting of 1500 trees was completed; in June of 2003, the rest were planted. Six varieties of olives are represented in the plantation. Two are primarily for oil production: the Allegra, an Italian-based strain, and the Fabulosa. The other varieties—Pendolino, Amphisa,

Megaron and Korotinas—are planted as pollinators for the Allegra and Fabulosa. The olives produced by those 4 pollinating varieties will be used for oil or for table olives.

Coming for the first time to the Metochion, the first impression of the olive trees may well remind the visitor of Christmas trees or conical pine trees. This is the result of a

a mechanical shaker to gather the fruit, the most economical method of harvesting currently available.

Our trees are expected to begin their initial crops after the third year. Some of our trees will be harvested for the first time this fall. In order for the trees to remain productive each year they have to be pruned and fed regularly at specific times of the year. Olive harvesting

in northern California is roughly October-December. It will take us a few years to develop the right timing for our own harvests. Timing is especially critical for the production of quality olive oil—the best oil is dependent on a sensitive time frame, when the individual olive is at the peak stage for pressing a fine oil. Our own researches thus far indicate that our plantation should produce about 4 tons of fruit per acre. This translates into

an unusually busy October-December for our monastic Brotherhood. On average, 1 ton of olives can, under the right conditions, produce between 30 to 50 gallons of oil. Different varieties produce variations in these numbers, as do weather, rainfall, soil conditions, timing of the harvest and a number of other factors which I’m sure we’ll be confronting in the not-too-distant future! Some varieties of olives will yield about 18% oil content. An exceptional yield is anything above 20%.

Our olive plantation now has its own olive oil mill, an Italian-



The newly planted olive orchard, June, 2002

careful program of pruning called the “central leader” plan. A more common pruning program is called the “vase” plan. Our decision to use the “central leader” plan is based on the comparative ease of harvesting the olives from trees pruned to that design. In olive production at the present time the most expensive stage of the entire process of producing olives for oil or table use is the harvesting of the fruit. It takes a lot of manpower—and time—to harvest an abundantly productive olive tree. Our hope is to have relatively full harvests of olives in the 6th year, using

made Peralisi “Fattoria” mill, installed in November, 2003. This mill is an industry-standard around the world, and its donation to us was a great blessing, as was the gift of the plantation itself and the new barn built to process the olive harvests. Our mill is a 2-phase system, which combines vegetable water from the olive, crushed pits and the mashed flesh of the olive as a by-product after a centrifuge has drained the fruit of its oil. The 2-phase system in olive oil production is deemed capable of producing the finest quality olive oil, and higher yields, than the traditional rotating stone mill, or 3-phase system.

The olive milling process consists of:

- 1) Leaf and twig removal by means of a vacuum blower mounted above an external washer unit;

- 2) Washing the fruit to remove soil, rocks and other debris;

- 3) Processing the cleaned olive through a hammermill crusher, in which the whole olive—with its pit—is mashed into a thick paste;

- 4) Processing through a malaxar bin and kneader, in which the paste is kneaded with small amounts of heat applied in the 70-80F range, by a water jacket surrounding the stainless steel bin;

- 5) Processing through a centrifuge, in which the paste is spun at 5500 rpm and the oil is extracted from the paste;

- 6) Processing through a vertical separator, in which the oil is clarified by spinning at 6800 rpm, a process that differs from filtering the oil.

When the oil exits the vertical separator it is ready for use, or it can be stored in commercial, food-

grade containers. Current industry standards hold the oil at this stage in containers for at least a week before bottling and selling.

All monastic communities try to be as self-sufficient as possible, and St. Gregory of Sinai has historically been almost exclusively dependent on the production of ikons as its main source of income. We produce a line of greeting cards, utilizing ikons from our own studio, or from our own collection, for the designs.

Agricultural work (in addition to the olive plantation 20 minutes from our Monastery, we also maintain a small organic fruit orchard and an organic vegetable garden at our Monastery, sufficient, thus far, for our own needs) provides an agreeable interface with our primary spiritual work as monks. In the beginning of the organized monastic movement, in order to provide for their needs and to remain occupied in non-distracting work, monks produced baskets,

carved spoons and bowls, and crafted a short list of common, simple implements. Our prayer is that as our community slowly grows, by the grace of God, we will be able to provide for ourselves, to provide modest alms as needed for the use of others, and to maintain the site that we have dedicated to the monastic life.

Hierodeacon Aimilianos has been given a blessing to act as Director of the olive plantation, and from time to time all the members of the Brotherhood become involved in caring for the trees, cleaning the olive mill and maintaining the olive barn facility. Monk Moses has been blessed to act as the Business Manager.

Entrusting ourselves to the mercy of God in this as in the other community programs, we pray that the olive plantation will enable us to continue to build the foundations that, as God wills, others who may follow us can build on in the years to come.



Father Panteleimon with Father Aimilianos in the olive orchard, October, 2004

Two Priests From Europe Join Our Church

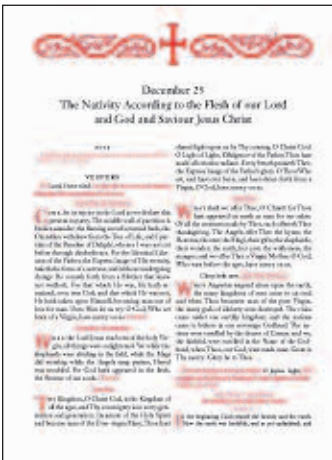
On April 9/22, 2005, during Compline for Lazarus Saturday, Father Elias and Father Maxime were received into our Synod by Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston.

Father Maxime Doyon was born August 6, 1945 in Porrentruy, Switzerland. After completing gymnasium (high school) he studied theology at the Catholic University in Fribourg and Luzern. During this period he spent time in several Catholic monasteries. In 1975 he quit his studies and became Orthodox. He worked in the insurance industry, as well as for several social organizations in Zurich. In 1983 he married Marianne Scheidegger. He was ordained a deacon in 1992, and a year later Bishop Photios of France ordained him a priest.

Father Elias (Pascal Christophe Amirault) was born March 16/29, 1964 in Poitiers, France. He was ordained Reader, Subdeacon and Hierodeacon on June 14/27, 1994. On the Feast of the Transfiguration that same year he was ordained Hieromonk, and received the Great Angelic Habit on September 1/14, 1998. Fr Elias served at Holy Trinity-St. Nectarios parish in Paris. Now he resides at Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Brookline, MA.



Fathers Elias and Maxime



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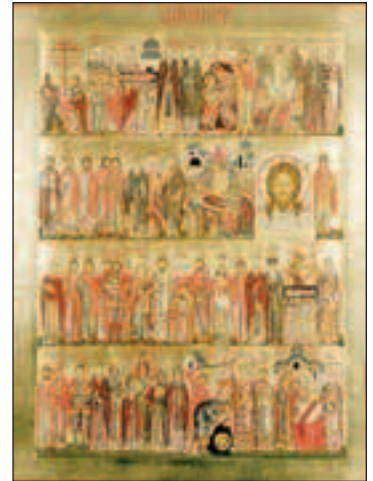
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AN ENCYCLICAL ON THE MORAL LAW OF GOD

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Throughout her sojourn in this fallen world, the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ—Israel, Old and New—has had to confront false doctrine and to make clear, first for us, the Chosen People of God, and then for the rest of Mankind, the soul-saving truths concerning our True God and the ways He has appointed for us and our salvation.

Thus, for example, in the time of St. Elias, that mighty and zealous Prophet denounced and overturned the false worship of Jezebel's idols and reaffirmed Israel's adoration of our True and Living God. In later centuries, the Holy Fathers gathered together in Council to reject the blasphemy that Jesus Christ is no more than a created man and to proclaim that the Messiah is both Perfect God and Perfect Man. More recently, the Church has condemned the pernicious pan-heresy of Ecumenism and has plainly professed that ours, alone, is the one True Religion, one True God, one True Christ and Saviour, one True Church and Israel which is the only fount of saving grace through the Holy Mysteries and the other Sacred Rites of the one True Body of Christ.

Consequently, we are called upon yet again to point out to the world its doctrinal and moral errors and to confirm for all the one True Way of our God. For God and for us Orthodox Christians, theology and morality are integrally intertwined. Indeed, our morality—the way our Merciful Benefactor has appointed for us to live—is a direct expression of our doctrine concerning God. So it has always been for Israel.

The Ten Commandments begin with doctrinal statements—the first four Commandments about Who is the only True God and how He is to be worshipped and revered. Thereafter come the remaining six Commandments which are founded on the preceding four. That is, we honor our parents, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not murder, do not bear false witness, and do not covet our neighbor's goods precisely because of Who our God is. In order to be sure we understand what He means by these Commandments, our Lord explained each of them in greater detail to the Holy Prophet and God-seer Moses.

What the Orthodox Church of Christ proclaims to be the moral law for Man made in the Image of God does not emanate from the mind of man but is none other than the Word of God spoken by the Word of God Himself, before and after His coming in the flesh. Our Lord directed us to live according to His ways not at all for His benefit, but entirely for our profit. God's moral law befits and reflects the Image of God in which we are made and guides us to and sanctifies within us a profound, grace-filled happiness for our life in this world. There is no other way. Therefore, we preach no other way.

Hence, for the Glory of the Lord, out of love, and because this is our sacred duty, we must declare aloud the moral law of God to counter the moral degeneracy of this present age.

Because theology and morality are intertwined, the legitimizing of immorality—that is, moral

behavior contrary to the moral law of God—by civil powers and by the so-called “mainstream” Christian denominations in the West in general and in North America in particular—is the direct consequence and moral expression of the pan-heresy of Ecumenism.

Since—according to that lie—all religions are legitimate, all gods are legitimate, all religious rites and ways are legitimate, then it follows that all “moralities” and no morality are legitimate. The Ten Commandments of the True God are of no greater importance than the pronouncements of Vishnu or Mohammed or Zeus or the Buddha or the Dalai Lama or the Great Spirit in the sky.

If, therefore, one of those religions permits the destruction of deformed infants or suffering and infirm adults because of their purported “poor quality of life”, which of those faiths that share in the ecumenist heresy can protest, since all religious ways and views and practices are equally legitimate?

Again, if one of those religions permits bigamy or polygamy or incestuous relationships or homosexuality or fornication, which of those faiths that share in the ecumenist heresy can protest since all the religions' ways are equally legitimate?

As teachers in the Church of Christ, we denounce the utter depravity of these days, and we proclaim that there is only one moral law for us and all of Mankind, the law of our God, the Creator and Fashioner of all. According to this law, abortion and so-called euthanasia, for any reason, are murder and are not permitted by the God Who made us in His Image. Similarly, homosexual sex and, for that matter, any sex outside of the lawful marriage of one man to one woman, are contrary to the Commandments of God and not permitted by Him Who made us all in His Image.

We find utterly repugnant that some would distort the Word of God to justify any of these sins on the basis of supposed Divine compassion or love. We find equally vile that others would pervert the Word of God to justify any of these sins by denouncing the Saints of God or even God Himself, as insecure or bigoted or ignorant of the true nature of man or hateful or inwardly disturbed and, using such as pretext, would reject the moral teachings of the Church.

To address specifically homosexual marriage, since it is the latest madness to be codified into civil law and to be permitted by many of the ecumenist and other false religions, even those fraudulently calling themselves Christian, we assert that the Lord God, in Leviticus 18:22 (“And thou shalt not lie with a man as with a woman, for it is an abomination.”), prohibited men from lying with other men as with women precisely because He is compassionate and loving and desires all that is good for Mankind, since He is fully aware of man’s nature. It is a biological certainty, an irrefutable scientific fact, that successive generations of humanity are the result of a heterosexual union, the sperm of a man with the egg of a woman. This is the natural creation that God ordained for man out of Divine compassion and love, and the means for the survival of the human race in this fallen world.

Man was neither made sinful, nor corrupt, nor was he made for sin or corruption. Man was made incorrupt and for sharing in the incorrupt Life of the All-holy Trinity, now attainable through Christ Jesus.

Sin is not an offense against God; the Lord cannot be offended, insulted, or hurt. Sin is an offense against ourselves, a corruption of our human nature hurtful to us, not to God. The entire purpose of God’s moral law is to help us lead the normal life of incorruption, as much as possible in the

fallen world, so that our hearts and souls would be open to divine grace and we would rejoice forever abiding in the Glory of God. This is what is normal for human nature; everything that falls short of this, everything that is corrupt, regardless of its origin or composition, is abnormal.

When St. Paul, frequently and sordidly abused by those who are today supporting homosexuality, in his first epistle to the Corinthians (6:9-10), enumerates types of sinners who “shall not inherit the Kingdom of God” (“Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God.”), the Apostle is referring to those who are not repentant, who refuse to see the sin in their life as corruption and abnormal. The unrepentant sinner has no place in the Kingdom of Heaven, but Heaven is full of repentant sinners of every kind. We do not vilify people either for their outward conduct or for their innate or other inner corruption and abnormalities. However, each of us is responsible for his behavior, regardless of his inner proclivities, and it is for our own behavior that each one of us is accountable.

Still, we do not condemn sinners; we ourselves, like all men, are sinners. On the contrary, the Church is open to all sinners, irrespective of their sins, who sorrowfully and compunctionately acknowledge that their sin is, indeed, corrupt and abnormal, and is not what God intended for them, and who desire and struggle to live according to God’s law.

It is God Himself Who condemns the perverting of His eternal law, our distorting or denying of its precepts, to the end that we might pander to our own passions, proclivities, and sins. The Lord Himself, and not we, condemns them “that call evil good, good evil; who make darkness light, and light darkness; who make bitter sweet, and sweet bitter...that are wise in their own conceit, and knowing in their own sight” (Esaia 5:20, 21).

The Christ Jesus preached by St. Paul and Who redeemed St. Paul from his own sinfulness, the Christ Who saved thieves and murderers and sexual transgressors who, repenting, asked for forgiveness: this is the Christ we know, love, and adore, this is the Christ we also preach, the Christ Jesus Whose Kingdom has a place for every single sinner who repents of his sins and wholeheartedly confesses “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and unto the ages.” Amen.

✠Ephraim, Metropolitan of Boston
✠Makarios, Metropolitan of Toronto
✠Moses, Metropolitan of Seattle
✠Sergios, Bishop of Loch Lomond

Protocol Number 2414
Monday of the Holy Spirit 2005

The Holy Ascension Orthodox Mission Parish

In the fall of 1996 His Eminence, Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston, called a meeting for all the South Shore Orthodox flock to meet at Fr. George and Presbyteria Sofia Liadis' residence in Carver, MA to address the subject of establishing a parish in the South Shore. The feedback and general consensus of that meeting resulted in no action being taken.

Presbyteria Sofia and Fr. George, struggling with illness and spiritual trials, wanted for a long time to build a room, as an addition to their existing home, for family prayer and services. In 1997, Metropolitan Ephraim gave them his blessing. The chapel was dedicated to the family's patron saints: Saints Seraphim, George, Sophia, Nicholas, and Alexander.

Upon completion, Fr. George and Presbyteria Sofia invited His Eminence to visit and bless their new area of prayer. On a Saturday in September 1998, Metropolitan Ephraim, Elder Panteleimon, and Fr. Isaac, abbot of Holy Transfiguration Monastery, visited Fr. George and Presbyteria Sofia's home and served the Divine Liturgy. It was a blessed day indeed.

As time went on, a renewed interest in establishing a parish on the South Shore was addressed. When spring came along in April of 2000, Metropolitan Ephraim together with Fr. Christos Constantinou (Protopresbyter of St. Mark of Ephesus Orthodox Cathedral) discussed the reassignment of Fr. George Liadis from being the assistant priest of the Cathedral to the parish priest of the Holy Ascension of Our Saviour Orthodox Mission Parish for the South Shore. In June 2000, Fr. Christos announced this assignment to his parish.

On August 28/September 10th, 2000, Metropolitan Ephraim served the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with Fr. George Liadis and Archdeacon Andrew, commencing the liturgical life of Holy Ascension of Our Saviour Orthodox Mission Parish.

How did the parish inherit its name? From 1977-79, George Liadis served as president at Ascension of Our Saviour Church in Westland, MI. In the early 1980's, the church moved to the second floor apartment of Fr. George's parents' home in Detroit. Soon after, the church closed. Nicholas and

Despina Liadis were entrusted with many of the icons and sacred items of the Ascension of Our Saviour Church. They moved to Boston to be with their son George and his family. Nicholas and Despina were tonsured, being renamed Fr. Parthenios and M. Marcella respectively. Before their repose they entrusted the Ascension of Our Saviour Church icons and sacred items to their son Fr. George. In gratitude for this blessing and in honor of the Lord and Saviour's Ascension into the Heavens and His promise for those who love Him, the faithful wholeheartedly accepted the dedication of this parish to the Lord and Saviour's Holy Ascension.

The faithful of the Holy Ascension of Our Saviour Orthodox Mission Parish, as with the faithful of any of the HOCNA parishes, intend to practice, proclaim, propagate and perpetuate the truth of our Orthodox Christian faith in accordance with the doctrines, canons, worship, discipline and tradition of our Faith. By the guidance and prayers of our HOCNA bishops, the fathers and mothers of our monastic communities, our clergy and laity, we hold to their examples in the rejecting of ecumenism and the ecumenical movement and all the doctrines and practices that are against the Orthodox Christian Faith.

The Holy Ascension parish, as in the examples of the brethren of our sister parishes of HOCNA, intends to foster and sustain a religious faith, a spiritual and moral way of life, and a life of Chris-

tian stewardship nurtured by the liturgical life of our Saviour in the Holy Mysteries of His Church.

In the five years of the parish's existence, by the grace of our Lord through the prayers and blessings of Metropolitan Ephraim, the Holy Ascension of Our Saviour Orthodox Mission Parish has been incorporated. The women of the parish have dedicated the Philoptochos Society to St. Photini, the Samaritan Woman. They have initiated several fund raising events for the building fund in the hope of purchasing a church building. By the grace of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ, the intercessions of the Holy Theotokos and of all the Saints, we the parishioners ask for all of you to continue to pray for the Holy Ascension of Our Saviour Orthodox Mission Parish.



*Holy Ascension 2005
Fathers Barsanuphius, John Fleser, George Liadis, Ignatius and Otari Deisadze*

Abbess Maria Myrtidiótissa, Pilgrimess

In the world Katíngo [Katherine] Lemos (1912-2005)

Mother Maria Myrtidiótissa, the abbess—together with her former husband who reposed in 1966—were the founders of the Convent of the Annunciation on the little Aegean isle of Oinoussai near Chios, and they were both descendants of shipping families from that small isle. It was in 1931 that she married Panágos (Panayiotos) Pateras. Together they had three children, Calliópi, Diamantís, and Irene, who at the end of her life received the Angelic Schema with the name Irene Myrtidiótissa.

The family lived a conventionally Christian life in ease and flourishing health until the first visitation of the grace of our Christ in 1952. The Lord, Who willed that they increase in wisdom through temptations, allowed the father to suddenly become ill with Hodgkins' disease.

The illness was diagnosed in Greece in 1953. From that time, they travelled to different places in Europe and America for radiation treatment, but in view of the uncontrollable advance of the disease, the doctors gave him only one or two years to live. In fact, thanks to the prayers of his youngest daughter and by the grace of God, he lived thirteen more years. Before his repose, he was tonsured into the Angelic Schema with the name Xenophon.

A little less than a year after the repose of Father Xenophon, his wife was tonsured into the Angelic Schema, receiving the name of Maria Myrtidiótissa. The insistent exhortations of the clairvoyant Elder Ierónymos strengthened her in this decision, which had been pending for many years. The personal notations of the Reverend Mother relate the last instructions of the great Elder as he lay critically ill in the Alexandra Hospital at the end of September, 1966, a few days before his repose:

I had gone anxiously to see him and receive his blessing. With many tears and prayers he received me, resting his holy hand on my wretched head and blessing me. He began to speak slowly and with pain. ... "Forty days after the repose of Xenophon (he meant as soon as possible), you will take off the black garments of mourning and put on the black habit of a nun. ... You will become a nun; Father Panteleimon will tonsure you. Go to the Convent of the Annunciation; there you will assume the duties of abbess."

When I expressed my hesitation as unsuitable and unworthy, he was implacable, and gave no heed when I told him my decision not to assume the abbacy. He rather repeated his directive in an imperative tone that did not allow a second word.

"Have a gold cross made, which will have the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ engraved on it and the initials IC XC NI KA (Jesus Christ conquers). On the back engrave the date of the foundation of the Convent and the dedication that it will be placed in the Holy Prothesis of the altar after your death. You will always wear it."

After a short silence he continued, "You will pass through many sorrows. ..." I looked at him with surprise and pain, because I had already tasted many bitter cups of sorrow and I could not imagine greater, but I thought, "Glory be to God; whatever He wills," and waited for him to continue.*

"Yes, you will have many sorrows. ... And also, they will all say, 'Here Katina's at fault, there Katina's at fault.' Whatever goes wrong, they'll say that you are to blame.

"For the sake of historical record, it should be carved over the grave of Father Xenophon that he is the Founder of the Convent and that this holy Convent was built by Panágos and Katíngo Pateras. Both his and your grave should be located next to the catholicon of the Convent and on the side of the Holy Prothesis. On yours, have inscribed, 'I was born in sins, I died in sins. I ask forgiveness of all whom I grieved, and I forgive all who grieved me.'"

This is how, by the will of God and through the prayers of our holy Fathers, the Reverend Mother Maria assumed the responsibility of shepherding the rational sheep of the Convent which she built together with her husband, the blessed Father Xenophon.

Mother Maria Myrtidiótissa reposed peacefully on the evening of Ascension, 2005. She was 93 years old.

*The word of the Elder was in some measure fulfilled when later, in 1978 and 1983, her two other children suddenly reposed. The Reverend Mother faced these trials with deep faith in the love of God, hope in the Resurrection, and patience.

Face To Face With the Mystery of Death

Excerpts from a letter written by Fr. Demetrius of Holy Transfiguration Monastery

We traveled to Chios and straightway took a boat to the convent, arriving just before Vespers which was at 8:30 p.m. (7:30 p.m. according to the convent time.) We went straight in to see Mother Mary. When we entered the convent, Fr. Cyprian met us with all of the sisters who chanted “Christós Anésti.”

Mother Mary was lying in her bed looking like she was ready to repose. She lasted the week. Elder Panteleimon would go in every day, give her Communion, and read prayers, but I saw her only a few times. One time she was alert. The sisters said she hadn’t been so alert in a long time. She couldn’t move much, and her head was tilted towards the right. She opened her eyes, looked straight at the elder, and then looked straight at me. She had such a strong look of confidence in her eyes. She pretty much knew the time had come, and those of us who knew Mother, knew that one of her greatest gifts was the gift of faith in our Saviour, the Mother of God, the Saints, and the Heavenly Hosts of Angels. She loved the Church and all that which the Church teaches us.

The sisters believed that Mother was about to repose, because a few days before her repose the icon of the Mother of God “Ktitorissa” fell off the wall for no reason in one of the chapels. They thought this because the same thing happened when Fr. Xenophon (her husband) reposed—only it was an icon of St. Nicholas. Also,

on the day of Ascension, St. John the Russian also celebrated the day of his repose (we transferred the feast to Saturday, which was the day of the funeral). Anyhow, across from Mother’s bed was an icon of St. John the Russian. A drop of oil came out of the icon and they anointed Mother’s head with the oil. The Elder said, “What can I say, *Páter*—these things do happen sometimes.”



Mother Mary 1912-2005

At around 7:15 p.m. (convent time) they hit the wood for the Vespers service, which takes place 15 minutes later. As we were walking toward the convent someone was buzzing us at the clergy living quarters. I didn’t run back to pick up the intercom because we were close to the convent. The Elder and I ran,

Mother Chrystonymphe opened the gate and said “Mother.” The Elder and I ran to Mother’s room. She had just breathed her last. Once again we were awed, being face to face with the mystery of death.

On Saturday many people came for the funeral. Many travelled just for the day from all parts of Greece. Some even came from England. Fr. Cyprian came from Athens and served with us; Fr. Ambrose from the Skete of the Holy Fathers on Chios also came (he belongs to Kioussis’ Synod), and the New-calendarist priest from the village of Oinousses (the same one—whom they say—says we have no grace) also showed up. The funeral went nicely. The Elder gave a nice sermon. Then Fr. Cyprian spoke, and he spoke very well. After that, one more man spoke. At the Last Kiss we had to chant extra hymns; mostly Paschal hymns. At the end of the funeral we had a memorial meal, part of which was the Elder’s pilaf for the Feast of St. John the Russian.

Things now at the convent are a little different without Mother Mary around anymore and it may take a little time for them to make the adjustments. We should pray that God covers them.

I’ll miss Mother, but I thank her for the blessing of being here when she reposed. I’ll always remember these events and remember her in the Divine Liturgy. May her memory be eternal.

Report on the Mission in Uganda

From the Missionary Society

Since the time of the pastoral visit of His Eminence Metropolitan Makarios and Fr. Deacon Barsanuphius to our Mission parishes in Uganda during the month of February 2005, many new developments have occurred. With the help of funding from the Benevolent Missionary Fund, all of our clergy and parishes there now have economic projects being established for their support. At St. Nicholas parish, Fr. Christopher Tamale has the grain mill factory running smoothly, providing jobs for some of the parishioners, and also providing some extra funds to allow some help to be given to numerous orphans who are members of that parish. At St. Menas parish, Fr. Deacon Azariah has started a small banana plantation. Fr. Christopher Kyagulani and Fr. Joseph Musoke Kimu have established poultry projects for the purpose of selling eggs. In Kampala, our clergy Fr. Elias Rusoke and Fr. Deacon Kevin have succeeded in purchasing a property that will suffice for the establishment of the new church of St. Nectarios, as well as a clergy residence, and office of the Metochion of the Holy Orthodox Metropolis of Boston. There is a separate building behind the main building that will provide extra guest quarters. Currently, renovations are underway to adjoin the two largest rooms of the house to create the new chapel. Fr. Elias Rusoke is already living in the house and services have been held there. Prayers are asked for the successful establishment of the parish of St. Nectarios in its new location. Also, requests have been made for any of the faithful from our churches here who are willing to make the sacrifice of their time and share their love in Christ, to make a trip to Uganda and spend a little time with our people there, giving some instruction concerning our Holy Orthodox Faith. Besides teaching, help is also welcome by those who have some building or carpentry skills. For any clergy, lay men, or married couples who may be able to travel there, housing can be given at the guest quarters of St. Nectarios church in Kampala. Those who feel they may be able to do this can contact Fr. John Fleaser at St. Philaret's House in Roslindale, MA by phoning (617) 323-6379, or sending an e-mail to frjohn@homb.org.

There is also a new church of St. Basil being constructed in Kiboga where Fr. Spiridon Kisomose is priest. Fr. Spiridon's parish has received some sewing equipment to set up a sewing business for commercial items as well as the making of clergy vestments. The women's group of the parish of St. Basil hopes to get started with this pending some further instruction and licensure. Again, prayers are requested for the continued establishment of these projects and the spiritual growth of our many new converts and parishioners in our five parishes of Uganda: St. Nicholas, St. Nectarios, St. Menas, St. Basil, and St. Mark of Ephesus.



The new St. Nectarios Church and office



The Front of St. Basil's Church



Fr. Spiridon and servers in St. Basil's Church

St. Joseph's Celebrates 20 Years

Excerpts From Fr. David Belden's Talk at the Anniversary Dinner

The little Russian Orthodox Church of the Holy Resurrection, Berlin, New Hampshire, built by Czar St. Nicholas for the Russian woodsmen who came to work in northern New Hampshire was reopened after having been closed for decades, most of the Russians having died out over the years. A zealous young priest sent from St. Vladimir's Seminary in New York, built his congregation by reopening the church and instituting English language services which the Anglican priest and his wife (presbytera and I) began to attend. Fr. Michael and I were the only married priests in town, and hit it off rather well. The sign board at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church now read: "Daily Morning Prayer here at 8:00 a.m.; daily Vespers, Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church, 5:00 p.m." After a few months, my parish council asked me to remove the sign. However, when the plastic letters were removed from the black felt sign board, the message remained, faded by the sun: "Daily Vespers, Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church, 5:00 p.m." I told my council that "man proposes but God disposes." After the Chrismation of my family, our days at St. Barnabas, Berlin, were numbered!

The day I arrived at Christ the Saviour Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Toronto, a gentleman greeted me in Russian. I replied: "I apologize that I cannot speak Russian." The man gave me the 'once over' and said: "What kind of Russian priest can't speak Russian?" I replied, "I'm not a Russian priest—just plain." When I realized that this parish was not ready for English-language work, I asked, and received, a blessing to work on the campus of the University of Toronto.

With the assistance of Fr. Peter Carras of St. Nectarios Greek Orthodox Church (Russian Church Abroad) in Toronto, Fr. David met with Archbishop Vitaly of the Church Abroad. In August, 1985, July 31/August 13, the feast of St. Joseph of Arimathea, Fr. Peter invited the former Campus Ministry to use the basement facilities at St. Nectarios Church. The newly formed parish was named for St. Joseph of Arimathea because not only was this saint an apostolic figure, but one, who by tradition was connected to the British Isles, to which many of the convert members could trace their ancestry. On the occasion of his first visit, Archbishop Vitaly applauded this choice. He remembered his time as bishop in England, and reminded the parishioners of the miraculous 'Glastonbury Thorn' planted by St. Joseph, and which he had seen blossom on the Orthodox Christmas, January 7. He told the parishioners that the only reason for the existence of St. Joseph's was for the salvation of their souls and that he did not expect them to be Russians or Greeks but to develop their own identity as an English language parish. After 10 years in their 'little cave,' St. Joseph's acquired a new facility in the Toronto suburb of North York, at Wilson Heights and Goodwill Avenue, a pleasant residential area. The first services were held in the new church in March, 1995, Metropolitan Makarios of Toronto, and Ephraim of Boston, presiding.

THE ARIMATHEAN for Summer, 2000.

Today, we are celebrating the 20th anniversary of our beloved parish of St. Joseph of Arimathea. "When we have done all that we can do, we count ourselves unprofitable servants" (Luke 17:10). "Other men have labored and we have entered into their labors" (John 4:38). "Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase" (I Cor 3:6). When I say "Paul planted ..." I refer to Fr. Panagiotes. When I say "Other men have labored ..." I refer to our Bishop, Metropolitan Makarios. I compare myself to Apollos who "watered." But we must all remember that it is God Who "gave the increase."

Now it is time for Fr. Sergius Pellegrini to water God's garden, and more specifically St. Joseph's Glastonbury Thorn, remembering that we encounter many thorns before we reach the blossom! May that blossom continue to bloom, not only on True Christmas, but always!

Thank you
Father David+



About Our Logo
A Divine Confirmation

The cross on our masthead commemorates the miraculous appearance of the sign of the Cross near Athens on Sept. 14 (according to the traditional Orthodox calendar) in 1925. Anti-Orthodox and secularist forces in power in Greece, together with the Ecumenical Patriarchate, had forced the changing of the traditional church calendar in 1924 as a first step toward uniting with the heterodox churches of the West. Shining in the evening sky on the traditional feast day of the Exaltation of the Cross, this extraordinary appearance of the Cross is a divine confirmation of Holy Tradition in the Orthodox Church and of the calendar as one facet of Holy Tradition.

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The Faithful Steward is the official newsletter of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America. Under the editorship of Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston, *The Faithful Steward* appears three times yearly, and is delivered free of charge to the faithful of the Holy Metropolis of Boston. For others, a donation of \$1.50 an issue is requested.

THE DIOCESE NEEDS SUPPORT

“Every good giving and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights” (James 1:17). The perfect gift is the one that only membership in the Church can give: the knowledge of true worship and the grace of the Holy Mysteries. But our era suffers from a famine of truth and the true worship of God. In our weak way, we try to feed those who hunger for God. Your prayers and your donations help the Church in this awe-inspiring ministry. Another way to help is to make a bequest to the Church in your will. Remember that God loves a cheerful giver. Also remember that *The Faithful Steward*, although delivered free of charge to all members of our Metropolis, is in need of your support.



The Faithful Steward

A Newsletter of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America

1476 Centre St
Roslindale, MA 02131-1417

THE NEW COPIER AND FINISHER

Thanks to the generous contributions of our faithful, and thanks to some re-adjustments in our budgetary arrangements, the staff at St. Philaret's House in Roslindale is now able to bring you *The Faithful Steward* in higher resolution and LIVING COLOR! Beside that, we are also in a position to print the Greek publication, *Kivotós*, and *The True Vine* on our new equipment. This will save us thousands of dollars in printing costs. Also, some valuable and able volunteers have offered their services to our Publications Department, and so we are cooking on all four burners!

Our heartfelt gratitude to our benefactors and to our volunteers. May God grant you everything that is unto salvation and life everlasting. Thanks to you, our missionary reach is now much, much longer.

Thank you!